

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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Editorial

A Slice of Responsibility

Every atom of power of any kind represents just so much responsibility. Our brain power, whether in larger or lesser degree, which may be exerted for evil or good, our moral power, or the influence either beneficent or pernicious which we exert upon the character and conduct of others, the possession of wealth, which enlarges the danger of our personal force and the opportunities for its exercise, all these suggest a weight of responsibility which appals the serious mind. Upon the part of Christians the responsibility is increased by the distinct undertaking to advance the cause of righteousness. If I contract to do a certain thing, that engagement argues a much more specific and direct responsibility than merely my *fitness* to do the work. I engage my honor, my integrity; and if I am acting in any sort as the agent of another, my responsibility is increased by all the sanctions of his character and honor. If these are true considerations, if this is an accurate estimate of our personal responsibility, how can a Christian waste or put to a bad use or employ for selfish ends, either time or property? How can he waste his opportunities, or how neglect to press with all his faculties into every avenue of usefulness?

If personal responsibility can be classified preferentially, we would say that Christians are responsible: first, for the moral influence exerted in their families; secondly, in the church to which they belong; thirdly, in the community in which they live; and fourthly, upon society in general. In all these important spheres they are bound by every law of truth and honor, by every claim which God's love and mercy has upon them, and by every hope of the divine approval at the last day, to withstand and combat to the uttermost every agency and influence of evil. If this standard of practical righteousness was lived up to by all church members, there would be no saloon, no gambling dens, no garbage newspapers, less poverty, less suffering, less Sabbath breaking, less war. The church would soon become so mighty, so ag-

gressive, so effectually armed and equipped with all the agencies of extension, that the powers of darkness would be compelled to retire in defeat and confusion. What a different face would be put upon all the work of the church if our educational, publishing and missionary boards had all the material support which would flow to them were every member discharging the full measure of his responsibility.

It would be an interesting table of statistics to have them before our eyes, with mathematical exactness, the percentage of Christian professors who are living up to the standard of their duty. There is only one instance in history where this particular class of information was tabulated in mathematical terms. In a numerous community there were not fifty righteous? nor forty? nor thirty? nor twenty? nor ten? Suppose the same test were applied to our churches. In that membership of one hundred, are there fifty who are discharging their whole duty, living up to the full measure of their responsibility? Are there forty? or thirty? or twenty? or ten? or five? or one? Can you stand the test? Can I?

What is the trouble, and the remedy? There is a particular species of potter's clay which has a will and a conscience of its own. Its will is naturally and instinctively perverse, so that it will squirm in the hands of the potter, complain of his harsh treatment, and refuse to go down freely into the mould. Do you wonder that the potter, be he ever so patient and skillful, is unable to make of this refractory clay many useful and beautiful vessels? Behold, thou art this clay. The lesson of entire surrender, of unhesitating consecration, is what we need to learn. We do not dream what wonderful things God can do in us but for these stubborn wills of ours, this persevering instinct of resistance and rebellion and distrust which characterizes our halting, our crippled and barren spiritual life.

An old colored man in reading a well known hymn, which contains the line, "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense," mistook "sense" for "saints," and gave this version, "Judge not the Lord by feeble saints." What a pity that people will judge the Lord by feebly saints!